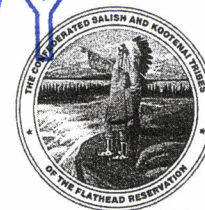


Salish Kootenai College

COPY



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SENATE EDUCATION

EXHIBIT

DATE

BILL NO

February 4, 2013

The Honorable Jonathan Windy Boy
Joint Subcommittee on Education
Montana Legislature

Re: Tribal College Issues—Interim Study

Dear Senator Windy Boy:

I write in support of Senate Joint Resolution 10 that you have introduced to establish an Interim Study to investigate options for enhancing programs, including those affecting tribal colleges. From the perspective of Salish Kootenai College (SKC), as well as other Montana tribal colleges, there are two such programs that necessitate legislative review: (1) the Non-beneficiary funding issue, and (2) the Adult Basic Education funding issue.

The Non-Beneficiary Funding Problem

A primary problem that confronts tribal colleges every year is insufficient funding to help defray expenses to educate “non-beneficiary” (NB) students, i.e., Montana resident students who do not generate federal funds. There are two aspects to this problem that necessitate legislative scrutiny and action.

First, a major source of the problem is that the authorizing statute (MT 20-25-248) vests the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE) with complete unbridled discretion to set the “line item appropriation” amount for tribal colleges. In short, tribal colleges are at the ongoing mercy of OCHE.

Second, MT 20-25-248, the NB enabling statute imposes a maximum of \$3,024 per NB students attending tribal colleges each year. This longstanding maximum and related annual funding ordeal cries out for review and amendatory action. In short, the Legislature should amend, by repealing the \$3,024 per NB student as the maximum amount, and replace it with a minimum amount that is fair, equitable, and reasonable. Such minimum amount should take into consideration that it costs tribal colleges up to \$9,200 per year to educate a single student. To put tribal colleges on an equal footing with the more powerful Regents and OCHE, the minimum amount should be realistic, fair, and equitable, and a product of meaningful consultation between the tribal colleges, OCHE, and the Regents. This consultation must acknowledge that, unlike the state’s three community colleges, tribal colleges lack taxing authority to require levies to raise local funds for institutional support.

The Honorable Jonathan Windy Boy

Page 2 of 2

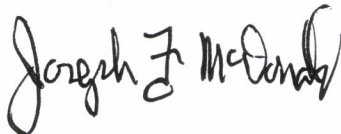
February 4, 2013

The Adult Basic Education (ABE) Problem

State implementation of the Adult Basic Education (ABE) funding formula eliminated the two remaining tribal colleges that received these funds. These two colleges were Salish Kootenai College (Flathead Reservation) and Chief Dull Knife College (Northern Cheyenne Reservation). The new funding formula redirected funding to larger programs. This rendered it infeasible for tribal colleges to participate. The bottom-line is that currently there are no state ABE funds allocated to tribal colleges serving the seven reservations in Montana. It is crucial to point out that 60%-70% of first-time freshmen need one or more remedial courses to succeed in postsecondary education. This compelling issue clearly needs to be reviewed and remedied by the Legislature, as it adversely affects tribal college enrollment, completion, and job placement of tribal members, as well as non-beneficiary students.

Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Joseph F. McDonald". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "J".

Joseph F. McDonald, Ed.D.
President Emeritus